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NEGROES IN BRAZIL

* 125 prêto" and "being poor and a branco," are perhaps too indecisive for statistical validity, considering the smallness of the sample.

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Whatever the limitations of this preliminary survey, however, there would appear to be a strong presumption—at least this hypothesis might be advanced for further testing—that, in determining rank at Bahia, the possession of white color is of *less* importance than certain other criteria.

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In choosing a marriage partner, students at Bahia considered to be "most important" personal competence, followed closely by extent of education. Only three respondents selected family affiliation (indicating, probably, that a shift in the traditional attitudes in this respect is well under way); and none selected economic condition. Nor did anyone mention color as the "most important" criterion. Chosen as the "second most important" was extent of education, closely followed by personal competence, family affiliation, and economic condition, in that order. Color was selected as "second most important" by only two respondents. Given as "least important" was color, a striking fact, since, in such a situation as that involved in these selections many observers think the so-called "acid test" of any racial situation lies.

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Although the sample from each of the five cities is too small to measure the variations between these cities with any reliability, the five samples taken as a whole, at least in those cases where consistencies appear throughout, can perhaps give us at least preliminary data on possible tendencies in Brazil, pending, of course, further and more complete investigation.

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When choosing a life partner, these students in all five cities considered the "most important" criterion to be: first, extent of education; and, then, personal competence, family

4; Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967

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affiliation, economic condition, and color, in that order. There was a surprisingly high degree of concordance in all five cities, the highest number of selections in each case being either personal competence or educational achievement. These two criteria were also most chosen as the "second most important" in all cities except one (where economic condition received the highest number of preferences for second place). As the "least important" criterion in a marriage partner, color was overwhelmingly selected in all cities, without exception.

What do these data mean? Are they illusory, by reason of flaws in the investigative tool? Do they point even more sharply to what some careful investigators have suggested regarding the differences between verbal and actual behavior? Or, taking into due consideration the admitted limitations of this preliminary survey, and taking also into consideration possible variants in verbal as contrasted with actual behavior, does there not still remain a strong likelihood that the role of color has been exaggerated by certain investigators who are familiar with other racial situations and simply cannot believe what lies before them? Or by local investigators who are in revolt regarding what they consider to be an overemphasis on Brazil's being a "racial democracy" and have deliberately set out to prove the reverse and in so doing have emphasized unduly certain limited aspects of the total situation and thus thrown the "picture" out of focus?

Wagley (1963b:153) reports that the hypotheses which emerged out of our study of Bahia were reaffirmed, in general, by the studies which he and his associates made in the same state and in the Amazon valley. They appear to be acceptable to the Bahian researcher, Thales de Azevedo; as well as to Felte Bezerra (1950; 1956), with reference to the

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 [583] Dampier, who visited Bahia in the seventeenth century, knew several Europeans living in common-law marriage with Negro women. By this time the relations were not merely casual affairs. "Many an African woman," we are told, "had managed to gain the respect of her white mate; some through the fear inspired by their *mandingas* (black magic); others, like the Minas for example, by their affectionate natures and womanly qualities."¹⁶ "At least a minority of these women had by this time achieved for themselves . . . positions as housekeepers to the whites; no longer were they kept in the *sensalas* merely for the physical pleasure of their masters and the increase of his human capital." By the early nineteenth century the marriage of white men with *mulheres de cor* were, we are told, not rare.¹⁷

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 [171] The women involved, like the Osage Indian women of the United States, for instance, whose oil lands have increased their desirability as wives for white men,¹⁸ often possessed considerable property. Such cases were "commented upon in intimate circles but without acrimony, especially when the excuse proved to be the dowry of the bride."

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 * 563 Other marriage partners of the whites were mixed-bloods, men as well as women. Gradually, we are told, marriages with mulattoes came "no longer to be disdained as they formerly were, now that the high position of the mulatto

¹⁶ Freyre, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

¹⁷ Koster, *op. cit.*, II, 178.

¹⁸ "The white demand for Osage women, who are rich in oil land, is now so great that the Indian agent requires every prospective husband to give a bond, submit to a physical examination, and present character references. White husbands have become so easy to get that they are now considered somewhat less desirable than even Indian men of other tribes" (Ralph Linton, "An Anthropological View of Race Mixture," *Publications of the American Sociological Society*, XIX [1924], 76).

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took over at least three cultural elements whose presence in the mores of colonial Brazil may be significant for our problem: the practice of concubinage, the subordinate position of woman in the household, and the comparative absence of color consciousness.

It may be that the Portuguese, like the Moors and other Mohammedans, were, as several commentators have said, a "color-blind" people; that is, awareness of color and other racial differences was not so pronounced with them as with us. It is probably true that the *conceptions* laid down in the culture materially influence the *perceptions* which individuals have.

Perhaps one reason the Portuguese in the New Country and their descendants cohabited with individuals from other races and interbred so extensively was that such behavior had long been common in the Old Country, where their ancestors had taken over from the Moors oriental customs tolerant of plural marriage. Even when Orientals exclude the children of concubines from the legitimate family in an attempt to preserve its status, emphasis is upon preserving status rather than purity of race.

Concubinage, or *mancebia*, as it is known in Bahia, seems to have been quite common throughout the history of Brazil. It appears always to have been more or less socially sanctioned and accepted into the mores. Divorce is illegal, and many marriages are made for family convenience. It is not rare today in Bahia for a man with a legal wife and family to keep in separate establishments one or more *amanes*.¹ The

¹ In one reported instance there are five; in another, eight. Usually the man, owing to the expense involved, is well to do; the women are from the lower strata. For instance, a wealthy and prominent intellectual figure lives most of the time apart from his legal wife with a mulatto woman who is intelligent, "attractive," and has traveled (with him) in France, Belgium,

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A fact known in Bahia is that during one of the two world wars an important German firm transferred the responsibility for its warehouses to one of its employees, a moreno, who had always been its confidential agent and who proved in this situation that he was really faithful by subsequently loyally returning the goods that had been entrusted to him. A mulatto merchant,

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owner of a warehouse, recalls that German firms helped small Brazilian merchants a great deal, no matter what their physical characteristics were, by granting them credit facilities. "It was

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in this way that this firm developed, with the help of Germans," he says, "at the time when the large Portuguese firms, formerly the most important, did not offer any facilities to colored people and did not even allow them to work in their offices." The owner-

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ship of firms was almost always transferred by the familial route by means of marriages between the most capable employees and the daughters of owners and associates, which explains why the management of these firms always remained with the Portuguese and their descendants. One and the same firm could, moreover, in certain cases give birth to two or three other firms of the same structure, thanks to the competence of the owners' sons, who, with the aid of their parents, set themselves up on their own.

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A wealthy contractor thinks that it is owing to his black color that he did not progress in the modest employment that he had in an important commercial firm. In order to advance, he says, he was obliged to give up commerce and devote himself to jobs as a contractor. It is evident that the stagnation of some employees in occupations of little importance arises, in the majority of cases, from their incompetence, it being a fact that in Bahia, even today, but especially in the very recent past, the /Figs. 5 and 6 appear here/ /49/ young men who intended to go into commerce had not completed secondary studies, or showed themselves

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incapable of continuing them. This situation is tending to improve, but the majority of minor employees is still made up of young colored men coming from poor families and from a very low level of education. These young people therefore have only minimal possibilities for elevating themselves in careers where success depends a great deal either on the importance of capital invested or on administrative knowledge.